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The Mystery Deepens

The story of last April's Cuban invasion fiasco seems to have become even more obfuscated by former President Eisenhower's denial that his administration drew up plans for the abortive anti-Castro movement. Until now, it had been generally assumed that the Eisenhower administration had helped the Cuban patriots prepare for the invasion in this country last year, and that the new Kennedy administration simply gave the signal for its launching.

As a matter of fact, first reports of the United States' role in the episode made it appear that the Eisenhower administration was primarily responsible for the entire affair. It is to President Kennedy's credit that he assumed full responsibility for the invasion effort after these reports were published, saying only that the Cubans were trained and equipped for the attempt during Mr. Eisenhower's tenure in office.

At that time, no one connected with the Eisenhower administration denied Mr. Kennedy's statements. Allen W. Dulles, the Eisenhower-appointed director of the Central Intelligence Agency, made it appear that the CIA knew all about the plan and took an active part in the movement. Mr. Dulles and Mr. Kennedy differed only on the matter of how well informed the CIA was about Fidel Castro's military strength, with Mr. Dulles claiming that his agency knew the score.

Mr. Eisenhower's comments probably will stir up much fresh discussion and argument over the affair, but when his remarks are scrutinized closely, there may not be as much room for conflict as appears on the surface. The former President put it this way:

"We had done nothing, except to

recognize that these Cuban refugees had a great desire to go back to Cuba, so we began organizing them and giving them weapons and training them. But beyond that we could not go, because at that time there was no recognized leader among the (refugee) Cubans."

This statement does not disagree basically with that made by the Kennedy administration. The variance seems to stem from interpretation of the word, "plan." It cannot be denied that if the Cubans were trained and equipped to attack Castro, an invasion was planned or, perhaps, it would be better to say, contemplated. Actually, there is a distinct possibility that there never was a detailed plan, as such, for the invasion attempt. From the poorly organized landings on the Cuban beaches and the rapid deterioration of resistance to Castro's forces, it would appear that the entire invasion attempt was a spur-of-the-moment campaign. Last spring, a high Washington official implied that there was no liaison with the Cuban rebels in the hills to insure reinforcements for the invaders—a further indication that the movement really was not planned too well.

The Cuban story has, it seems, wandered along the path of rumor, speculation and contradiction long enough. There is nothing to be gained or lost by withholding the facts any further. To set the record straight, Mr. Kennedy should—if he really knows it—publish the entire history of the patriots' futile campaign, letting the chips of responsibility fall where they may. As long as it continues to come out in bits and pieces, there will most assuredly be confusion and doubt.